



Peter McWalters
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

August 15, 2003

Dear Superintendent:

The purpose of this correspondence is to notify you of the **Rhode Island Policy –Unsafe School Choice Option**, which we were required to adopt by July 1, 2003. This notification to all school departments is also required. As you may be aware, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* requires each State receiving ESEA funds to allow students attending a *persistently dangerous public school*—or students who become *victims of a violent criminal offense* while on the grounds of their public school — to attend a safe public school. ESEA therefore requires each state to adopt a definition of *persistently dangerous public school* and *violent criminal offense* and a policy for the implementation of this requirement.

Enclosed is the policy for Rhode Island. You should know that this policy was developed by a statewide advisory committee representing superintendents, principals, central office administrators, the NEA and AFT, parents, the Office of the Attorney General and Department of Education. This committee was appointed by me and met throughout the winter and spring of the past school year. They referred to numerous pertinent documents as well as policies being adopted in other states and analyzed data elements that could be used with reliability before they recommended this policy for adoption. I commend them for the fine work they accomplished.

We are pleased to report that there are no schools in Rhode Island that will be designated as “persistently dangerous”. You will also note that, along with establishing the required definitions of ‘violent criminal offense’ (section 2.00) and ‘persistently dangerous school’ (section 3.00), the advisory committee also established a method to assist in preventing schools from becoming considered “dangerous”. In section 5.00, they established criteria for **Early Intervention and Remediation**. This section identifies the methods to determine if a school is in *need of enhanced security* or *in security remediation status*. Such schools will be contacted directly by my office.

I request that you familiarize yourself with this policy and be sure to make this known well within your community. You should discuss this with your central office and building level administrators well as with teachers, parents, school improvement teams, school committees, law enforcement or other appropriate individuals and groups.

Telephone (401)222-4600 **Fax** (401)222-6178 **TTY** 800-745-5555 **Voice** 800-745-6575

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex,
sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

It is the intent of this policy to ensure that our schools are safe places for learning and teaching and to set in motion formal procedures for the early identification of potentially harmful situations before they become serious safety or danger issues.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, you may contact George McDonough at 222-4600, ext. 2372 or Forrest Avila. They were the Department of Education staff that coordinated the work of the advisory committee and developed the final policy.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters

